



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

April 29, 2008

Mayor Wright called the Public Hearing to order at 6:46 PM in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall. He stated that the purpose of the Public Hearing is to provide an opportunity for interested individuals to express their views regarding Proposed Projects under the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant Program for 2008-2009.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Councilors Present:

Councilor Banach
Councilor Boni
Councilor Bottalico
Councilor Bowen
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Lenares
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright

Staff Present:

John L. Salomone, Town Manager
Ed Meehan, Town Planner

Town Planner Ed Meehan gave an overview of the Town's proposal for the 2008 Small Cities grant application. He stated that the purpose of the hearing is to give residents the opportunity to comment on the Town's proposed grant application as well as to receive any suggestions for community development projects that may be considered by the Council for Small Cities funding. He stated that the Public Hearing was advertised in the Hartford Courant on April 14 and April 24, 2008 and notice of the hearing was sent to the Newington Housing Authority, the Newington Senior and Disabled Center, and Welles Drive residents. Mr. Meehan stated that he is required to give an overview of what has occurred with the Town's Community Development program since 1993:

- 1993 – The Town first became involved in the Small Cities program through the Department of Economic and Community Development. Many successful projects have been completed since that time.
- 1998 - \$100,000 in improvements to Southfield Apartments, a low to moderate income family development off of Willard Avenue.
- 1999 - \$175,000 in improvements to the Southfield Children's Center.

- 1996 and 1998 - \$455,000 in improvements to the Buena Vista/Seymour Park area, including sidewalk, street and park improvements.
- 2001 - \$500,000 in code improvements to the Senior and Disabled Center.
- Since 1993, \$1.1 million in funds for rehab loans has been received, with 73 loans completed and repayment of 30 loans to date. The repayments are placed into the revolving Housing Rehab Loan Fund. Since July 1, \$27,000 has been repaid and two projects have been completed using these funds; four to five projects are completed each year using these funds.

Mr. Meehan stated that the projects concerning the Senior and Disabled Center and Housing Authority do adhere to the national objectives that HUD requests communities to address. These objectives include:

- To benefit low to moderate income residents
- Elimination of slums and blight
- Meeting community needs

Mr. Meehan stated that the Town can apply for up to \$700,000 for public housing improvements and that the focus will be housing for low to moderate income elderly and includes four components:

- Construct additional public parking for users of the Senior and Disabled Center and adjacent New Meadow housing.
- Improvements to the 26 existing apartments at New Meadow Village as identified by the Newington Housing Authority.
- Extension of Mill Street to become a permanent cul-de-sac to accommodate proposed new senior housing at New Meadow Phase II.
- Demotion of 90 Welles Drive North, a Town-owned building, to prepare for the site for age-restricted affordable housing constructed by the New Samaritan Corp.

Mr. Meehan stated that the Housing Authority would partner with the Town for the project and would be sub-recipients to any grant received from the Department of Economic and Community Development. He stated that the Engineering Department has prepared cost estimates to be used in the grant application. Cost estimates are as follows:

- Parking lot and road extension by 400 feet, including cleanout of sanitary laterals: \$310,000.
- Also included in that amount is cost to demolish 90 Welles Drive North, estimates ranged from \$14,000 to \$35,000.
- For the purpose of grant submission it is recommended that the Town go with the higher number to serve as a placeholder for the grant award.

Mr. Meehan noted that the Town would like to use grant funds to make some improvements to the existing New Meadow senior housing including cabinet replacement and tub cutouts for the apartments. He stated that the grant deadline is May 30, 2008 and the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) would begin the review process of all applications over the summer. He stated that the Town will not know at that point where New Samaritan stands with its HUD application, and that New Samaritan expects a decision from HUD in late fall 2008. He stated that while the Town is doing its best to get the grant application submitted to the Department of Economic and Community Development, the DECD may wish to wait to see how New Samaritan progresses with HUD before committing Small Cities grant money. Mr. Meehan commented that despite this it is worthwhile to move forward with the application. He also stated that the DECD has recently announced that the Housing Authority must obtain CHFA approval for its projects prior to submitting the Small Cities application in order to assure that any improvements to Housing Authority properties around the State meet CHFA standards before they become a Small Cities project.

Mr. Meehan explained the illustration of the proposed New Meadow housing site as displayed at the meeting, including the areas on the proposed site for the Senior Center parking lot, informal playfields, and the positioning of the proposed housing units.

Council question and answer session followed. Councilor Bowen inquired whether it would make sense to break the project up into sections so that worst case scenario the Town can get the parking lot and cul-de-sac done and perhaps even demolish the 90 Welles Drive North building regardless of the outcome of the grant application. Mr. Meehan replied that if the Town moves forward with the parking lot and then does not receive the grant money to demolish the building and extend the road then New Samaritan cannot push the new building north. He stated that New Samaritan would need part of that parking lot area for their site. Councilor Bowen stated that it might still be a good idea, for the good of the community, to demolish the

building, put in the cul-de-sac and construct the large parking lot as a stand alone project regardless of what happens with New Samaritan. Mr. Meehan stated that it would be a possibility to break the project into components, but there are a couple of problems with doing so. He stated that the Council did pass a resolution in February which authorizes the Town Manager to sign the option for the two acres at the south end of the project site, and until the exact site plan layout is known the parking lot may have to be eliminated. He suggested that the Town goes forward with the grant application and if the Housing Authority component can get CHFA approval prior to May 30, 2008 it would be a benefit. He stated that a way to split the project would be to go to a second phase once New Samaritan's standing with HUD is known. Councilor Bowen expressed concern that the Town may be forced to break that entire parcel up just because the pieces did not fit together as the project progressed. Mr. Meehan stated belief that the consensus has been that moving the project north is the better option for the neighborhood, the Senior Center and the Housing Authority as it allows for more green space on the site. Councilor Bowen agreed and restated his concern that New Samaritan is currently looking to place the building in the center of the property with the possibility of moving the building site north and that there is the possibility that the pieces will not come together to do so. Mr. Meehan stated that New Samaritan has expressed that they do not see a problem with moving the site north. He stated that the Town still has a month to work on the application and noted that the Town can obtain guidance from the DECD staff prior to submitting the application.

Deputy Mayor Lenares asked whether the proposed parking on the north side will accommodate only the building structure, and asked how many units are proposed to be built on the site. Mr. Meehan replied that there will be 30-34 units and the parking would be for the residents and staff of that building. Mayor Wright inquired about the pathway space. Mr. Meehan replied that the concept of the pathway is to continue the pathways to the playing field. He stated that the parking to the south would be owned by the Town for the benefit of the Senior Center and the Housing Authority. Town Manager Salomone stated that if the Town commits to the south parking lot it will then require the Town to push the building site to the north. Town Manager Salomone handed out a resolution, to be considered at the next Council meeting, to approve moving forward with the project.

Councilor Bowen asked whether part of the funding for the parking lot and the cul-de-sac should come from New Samaritan, since it has to provide parking for the building as part of the project. Mr. Meehan replied that New Samaritan will have to provide the parking, but the Town would have the responsibility to provide the road frontage to extend to the lot.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Everett Weaver, 87 Northwood Road: Mr. Weaver stated that he is not in opposition to senior housing in Town, but he is in opposition to the current plan as outlined. He stated that he has several objections to the current plan. Mr. Weaver expressed concern that the project will cost the taxpayers money for items not covered by the grants such as parking lots and other items. He also stated concern that there is no guarantee that Newington residents will be able to get into the thirty-four new units, since the units will be open to anyone. Mr. Weaver expressed concern about tearing down the 90 Welles Drive North building, which he estimated to be worth about one million dollars. He stated that in addition, NCTV, the Newington Art League and the Newington Garden Club will need to be relocated if the building is torn down. He noted that the layout of the plans may be a cause for wetlands concerns, as there is a 100-foot wetlands buffer in the area and the plans may call for the project to interfere with the buffer. Mr. Weaver again expressed concerns with the relocation of the NCTV facilities and stated that the relocation will require a major volunteer effort. He stated that the Town has several large blocks of open space in various areas and inquired as to why the Town cannot find a three or four acre property that would be suitable for the project and would be easier to access traffic-wise. He stated that traffic in the Mill Street and Cedar Street area along with the additional parking will create a traffic nightmare. Mr. Weaver stated that he is against the project in the area as it stands.

Dennis Phalen, Executive Director of the Newington Housing Authority. Mr. Phalen stated that there are five areas that the Housing Authority is interested in with its partnership with the Town for the Small Cities funds. He stated that the funds would go towards making improvements to the existing New Meadow housing units. He outlined the five areas for improvement:

1. Renovations to the bathrooms, including installation of tub cuts for walk-in showers for ease of use and safety. Cost is \$1,100 per unit for a total of \$28,600 for all 26 units.
2. Repair concrete sidewalks to address safety issues of cracks, uneven surfaces and areas where water puddles and ice forms. Cost estimate to follow.

3. Install sanitary sewer cleanouts for access to the sewers. Currently, in the event of a clogged sewer line the toilet will need to be removed in the unit in order to run a snake into the line, which is unpleasant for the residents. An outside cleanout will allow for the cleanup access from outside the unit. Cost estimate to follow.
4. Improvements to the landscape to include shrubs, flowering trees, benches and picnic tables. This is a quality of life issue, especially with the new phase being built across the street. Cost estimate is \$12,800.
5. Kitchen cabinets in the units. Cost estimate is about \$4,000 per unit for a total cost of \$104,000 for all 26 units.

Mayor Wright asked whether the funding for the senior housing will be obtained by New Samaritan from HUD. Town Manager Salomone replied that the new housing would be paid for under the 202 grant for New Samaritan. Mayor Wright asked whether the Small Cities grant funds discussed at the current meeting would fund the parking lot, the extension of the road, the improvements to the existing housing and the pathways. Town Manager Salomone replied that he is unsure whether the pathways are included in the funding. Mr. Meehan stated that the pathways are conceptual and that the grant will not cover landscaping items in relation to the pathways. Mayor Wright asked whether there are funds contained within the grant to actually move NCTV and the Art League to different facilities. Mr. Meehan stated that the Town can look towards the Small Cities money for relocation costs. Mayor Wright stated that the vast majority of the costs of the project will not fall to the taxpayers. Mr. Meehan replied that there is no local match required for the Small Cities application. Mayor Wright stated that the Newington taxpayers will not pay for the proposed housing and improvements. Mr. Meehan concurred. Mayor Wright stated that the Town cannot discriminate between Newington residents and non-Newington residents for the housing since the taxpayers are not paying for the new housing. Mr. Meehan concurred.

Barry Chudzik, 78 Welles Drive North: Mr. Chudzik spoke in opposition of using the grant funds to raze the 90 Welles Drive North building. He stated that if New Samaritan wishes to use that property it should be razed at New Samaritan's cost and the grant money should be used for other projects.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further public comment Councilor Bowen moved to close the Public Hearing at 7:20 pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Cohen.

Motion passed 9-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan
Clerk of the Council